

Message Text

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15

ACTION ARA-17

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00

USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-07 H-02 INR-10 L-03 NSC-10 PA-03

RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15 SSC-01 RSR-01 /072 W
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O R 262235 Z JUN 73

FM AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8348

INFO AMCONSUL BELEM

AMCONSUL PORTO ALEGRE

AMCONSUL RECIFE

AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO

AMCONSUL SALVADOR

AMCONSUL SA PAULO

C O N F I D E N T I A L BRASILIA 3979

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT BR

SUBJ: VICE PRESIDENTIAL SUCCESSION

1. AFTER MEETING WITH PRESIDENT MEDICI, FILINTO MULLER, IN HIS CAPACITY AS PRESIDENT OF ARENA, ANNOUNCED ON EVENING OF JUNE 25 THAT PRESIDENT HAD INDICATED GENERAL ADALBERTO PEREIRA DOS SANTOS AS CANDIDATE FOR VICE PRESIDENT. ANNOUNCEMENT MENTIONED THAT PRESIDENT MEDICI HAD CONSULTED WITH GENERAL GEISEL. GENERAL ADALBERTO, AGED 68, IS FOUR STAR GENERAL, PRESIDENT OF THE SUPREME MILITARY TRIBUNAL (A SPECIAL " ACTIVE DUTY" CATEGORY), AND A GAUCHO. HE IS HIGHLY RESPECTED MEMBER OF THE ARMED FORCES WHOSE NAME WAS MENTIONED FREQUENTLY DURING THE PAST FEW MONTHS AS A POTENTIAL PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE.

2. EMBASSY IS STRUCK BY VARIOUS FACETS OF THIS NOMINATION:
(A) IT IS CLEAR THAT ADALBERTO WAS PRESIDENT MEDICI' S CHOICE RATHER THAN GEISEL' S BUT THAT GEISEL ACCEPTED THE SELECTION OUT OF MOTIVES OF NOBLESSE OBLIGE AND IN ORDER TO PROVIDE A SMOOTH
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TRANSITION TO THE NEW ADMINISTRATION.

(B) CHOICE OF ADALBERTO PRESENTS AN IMAGE OF CONTINUITY WHICH CAN HELP INSURE THE ADHERENCE OF THE MEDICI GROUP IN THE ARMY, ESPECIALLY GENERAL FONTOURA AND THE SNI, AS WELL AS THE CAVALRYMEN WHO ARE HEAVILY REPRESENTED ON THE HIGH COMMAND.

(C) MANY OBSERVERS, AND PARTICULARLY THE PRESS, ARE INTERPRETING THE DESIGNATION AS AN INDICATION OF INTENT TO PROVIDE FOR A " REAL" VICE PRESIDENT. CONSIDERING GENERAL GEISEL' S AGE OF 65, THE PRESS COMMENTS ON THE POSSIBILITY OF A SMOOTH TRANSITION IN THE EVENT OF AN UNFORESEEN DISASTER. AN ARMY GENERAL CAN SUCCEED TO THE PRESIDENCY BECAUSE HE WOULD AUTOMATICALLY HAVE THE SUPPORT OF THE ARMY OFFICER CORPS WHICH WOULD NOT BE TRUE OF AN AIR FORCE OR NAVY OFFICER OR OF A CIVILIAN. (FOR EXAMPLE, AT THE TIME OF PRESIDENT COSTA E SILVA' S DEATH, VICE PRESIDENT PEDRO ALEIXO WAS REMOVED BECAUSE THE ARMED FORCES WERE NOT PREPARED AT THAT TIME TO GIVE POWER TO A CIVILIAN. IT WAS GENERALLY ACCEPTED THAT VICE PRESIDENT ADMIRAL RADEMAKER WOULD ALSO HAVE BEEN REPLACED IF IT BECAME NECESSARY.)

(D) ON THE OTHER HAND, SOME HONEST DOUBT CAN BE EXPRESSED AS TO WHETHER GENERAL ADALBERTO (WHO IS THREE YEARS OLDER THAN GEISEL AND HAS RELATIVELY LITTLE POLITICAL OR ADMINISTRATIVE EXPERIENCE) WOULD BE SUFFICIENTLY HIGH- POWERED TO RETAIN THE PRESIDENCY IF HE ACCEDES. IT CAN BE ARGUED THAT HE WOULD AT LEAST OBIVATE THE NECESSITY FOR THE FORMATION OF A MILITARY JUNTA AND COULD PROBABLY HOLD THE LINE UNTIL A NEW PRESIDENT IS SELECTED.

(E) ANOTHER CONSIDERATION IS THE MATTER OF ADALBERTO' S AGE OF 68. HIS DESIGNATION DISAPPOINTS THE HOPES OF YOUNGER GENERALS AND COLONELS THAT THEIR GENERATION SHOULD FINALLY BE REPRESENTED AT THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT. THE AIR FORCE AND NAVY MAY ALSO BE EXPECTED TO GRUMBLE SINCE THEIR SERVICES DID NOT RECEIVE THEIR DUE.

3. THE OVER- RIDING OBJECTIVE OF THE MILITARY, AS ALWAYS, WILL BE TO MAINTAIN THE UNITY OF THE ARMED FORCES. WHILE THE EMBASSY ANTICIPATES A DEGREE OF MILITARY GRUMBLING AND WILL CONTINUE TO FOLLOW THE SITUATION CLOSELY, NO UNFORESEEN DRAMATIC CIRCUMSTANCES ARE ANTICIPATED.
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